FREE!

MMOZine

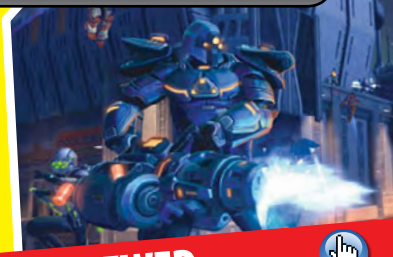
Issue 19 | March 2010

Free Magazine For MMO Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates

REVIEW
STAR TREK ONLINE
Prepare to raise shields!

PREVIEW & INTERVIEW
AGE OF CONAN: RISE OF THE GODSLAYER
THE HYBORIAN ADVENTURE CONTINUES!

LOVE + PERPETUUM ONLINE + MYTHEON + WORLD OF TANKS



+ REVIEWED
Global Agenda
The shape of war to come is… hexagonal?

+ INTERVIEW
Fallen Earth
The creators of the apocalypse are only just getting started

+ ON TRIAL
Warhammer Online
The freeloader's guide to playing in the Old World

Welcome to MMOZine

Warhammer and Conan may not have been as revolutionary as many hoped, but two years on both have improved significantly. Perhaps not on any fundamental level, but in terms of stability, content and future promise, Conan itself is at last starting to live up to the hype.

Which bodes well for the subjects of our two big reviews this issue. It's rare to enter a new persistent world that isn't either missing core features, gripping high-end content or crippled with stability issues. In most cases two out of three is the standard, and both Star Trek and Global Agenda are close to achieving that. Hopefully for both games, as it is for the likes of Fallen Earth and Aion, the journey to greatness is just beginning.

Richie Shoemaker, Editor
mmozine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

The MMOZine massive were told to go forth and multiplay, which they did…

MEGAN CLARK
Refreshing the Hyborean adventure, ready to slay gods.

PAUL PRESLEY
Shields are raised, the tea is hot and phasers are set for meh.

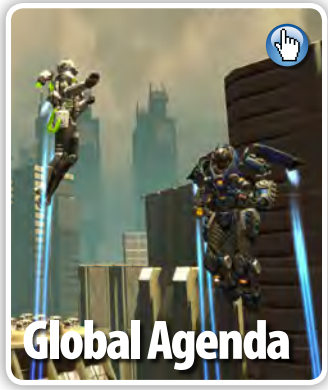
JIM ROSSIGNOL
Love, love, love. Love is all he needs, apparently.

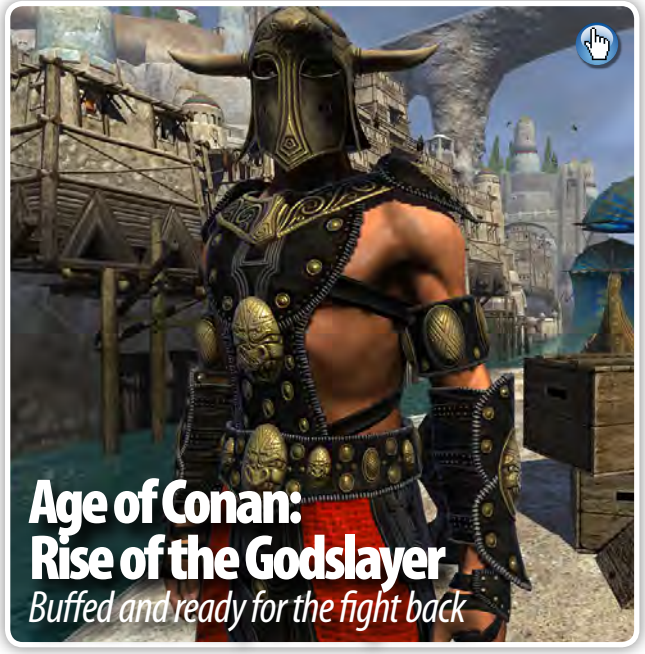
DON'T MISS!

This month's highlights…

STAR TREK ONLINE

It's Star Trek and it's online, but is that enough?





QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

Perpetuum Online
World of Tanks
Project: V13
Final Fantasy XI
City of Heroes: Going Rogue
Lord of the Rings Online
Gods & Heroes: Rome Rising
Warhammer 40,000 Online
Cities XL
Fallen Earth
Age of Conan: Rise of the Godslayer
Mytheon
Love
Global Agenda
Star Trek Online
Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning

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Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.

AION

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

A WORLD DIVIDED. A JOURNEY UNCHARTED.

WWW.AIONONLINE.COM

12+ www.pegi.info

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AION NCSOFT

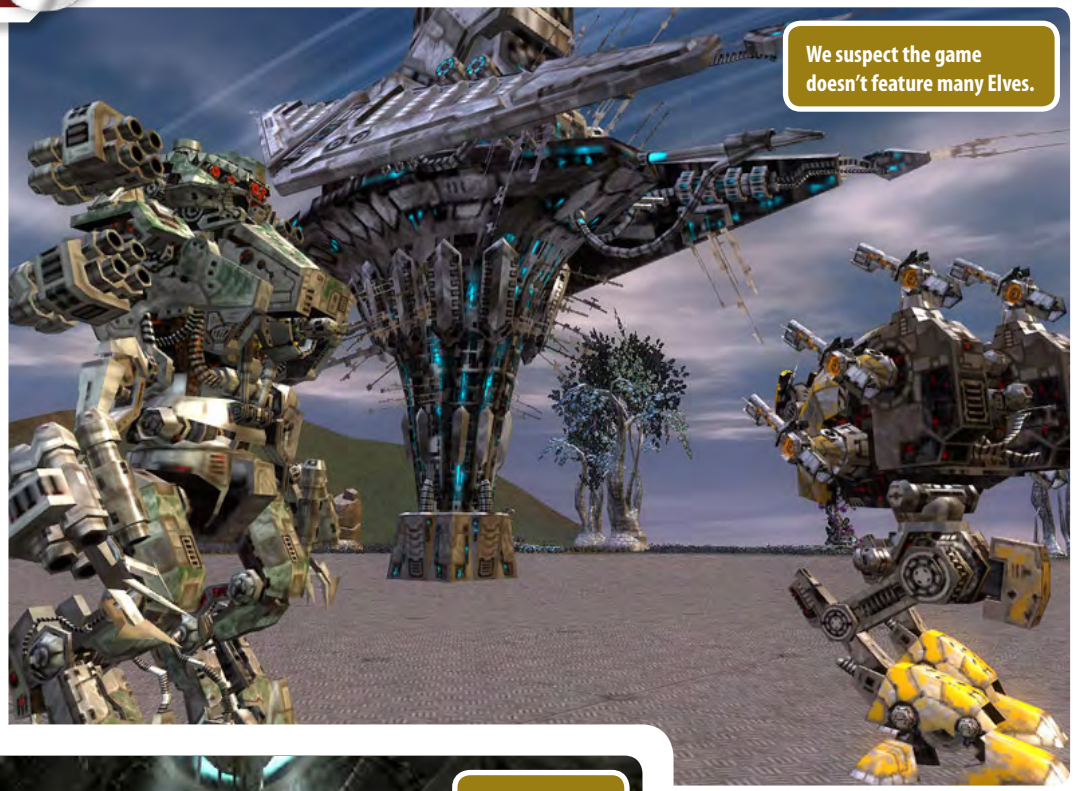
Perpetuum Online

A robot MMOG? Hell yes!

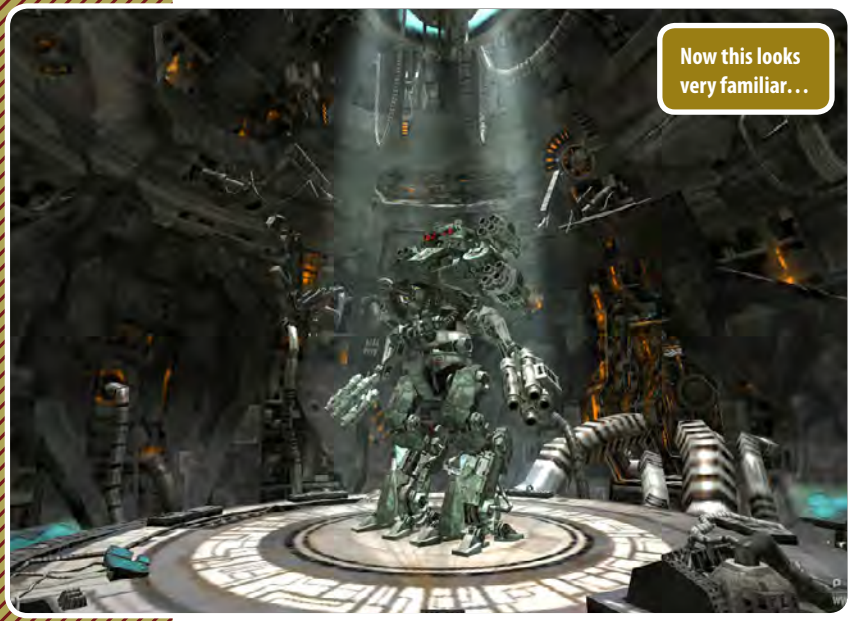
FIRST LOOK

Publisher: TBD
Developer: Avatar Creations
Heritage: None
Link: www.perpetuum-online.com
ETA: 2010

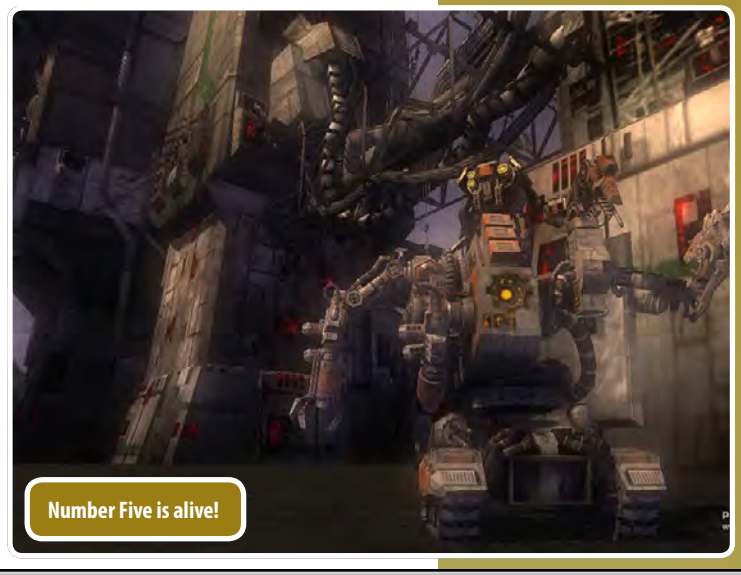
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Perpetuum Online



We suspect the game doesn't feature many Elves.



Now this looks very familiar…



Number Five is alive!

What's the story?

After squandering the resources of 21st Century planet Earth and blindly poking about in outer space looking for a replacement, humanity stumbles across the world of Nia, a veritable paradise 87,000 light years away from the nearest KFC. The problem for humanity is that the place is crawling with sentient robot creatures who are more than capable of turning back pesky human pioneers, except of course they haven't counted on the humans being crack MMO gamers keen to pilot robots of their own…

What do we know?

We know that it looks a lot like EVE and offers many similar features to the space MMOG, among them real-time skill training, a production-based economy, modular fittings and a single-server world where PvP is open and death lurks around every corner. The big difference is that when it comes to spaceships and planets, Perpetuum has none of the former and only one of the latter.

There are many subtle differences too, many of which come with direct control of skittering and stomping war machines rather than mouse-clicking spaceships. Expect battles to be smaller in scale, with use of destructible terrain an important tactical consideration. Mining for resources is also involved – more akin to scanning for wormholes in EVE than anything else.

When do we get more?

Perpetuum is currently in closed Beta testing, but there's plenty out there to chew on and new invites are going out all the time. Just a little digging around the official website should give you a good idea of what will be in store when the game eventually goes live.

CBT REGISTRATION OPEN NOW AT ALLODS.GPOTATO.EU

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Register to play subscriptionless for life at
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ALLODS ONLINE

VIDEO 1 VIDEO 2 VIDEO 3

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

ATTACK, DEFEND, LOOT OR PLUNDER! SET SAIL INTO THE ASTRAL WITH ALLODS ONLINE

"Allods Online has the potential to offer something really exciting in a genre that struggles to innovate"
(Videogamer.com, August 2009)

* Yep, you read that right. No subscriptions, ever!
Free to play MMORPG with player controlled space battleship in a fantasy space opera universe.
Allods Online features 2 factions, 28 classes, 1500 quests, PvP, PvE, raid, instance, boss monster, pets, guild, craft.
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gPotato ASTRUM NIVAL PC ONLINE

World of Tanks

Oh l'armour!

FIRST LOOK

Publisher: Wargaming.net
Developer: Wargaming.net
Heritage: Massive Assault, Order of War
Link: www.worldoftanks.com
ETA: 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of World of Tanks

No sign of any infantry. Maybe they're hiding.

What's the story?

Quoting a press release is often unnecessary, but when it urges you to 'manifest the indisputable authority of the tank', you can't help but succumb to the will of the game's marketeers. You see, far from being a dry simulation of armoured warfare, World of Tanks is being pitched as a fun rather than a fastidious simulation game; one where the vehicles will look realistic and handle as we think they should, but entirely within the context of an MMOG.

What do we know?

Featuring battles of up to 30-a-side, players will be able to command and collect up to 150 vehicles in their garage, from the most famous WWII Panzers, to more modern vehicles from the early phase of the Cold War – and even a smattering of experimental and obscure designs. Turrets, guns and chassis can all be upgraded, and even the crew can be levelled in preparation for mini campaigns, tournaments and even clan wars across global maps. We're not sure how persistent these clan wars will be, or what level of control can be leveraged from the provinces on the map, but the prospect of having hundreds of steel beasts fighting across deserts and through towns is more than enough to be getting excited about.

"World of Tanks is being pitched as a fun rather than a fastidious simulation game"

No PvE content is planned.

Despite a RTS heritage, vehicles will boast direct control.

When do we get more?

The developers have just finished a free add-on for their Order of War RTS, and are now fully engaged in completing World of Tanks, which is due for release in the Autumn. Hopefully Beta testing won't be far away.

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NCSOFT
LINEAGE II TEAM

CONTROL Close Issue Print Page Search Issue Zoom In Zoom Out Toggle Full Screen Previous Page Next Page

7 UP

New MMOs and content updates to mark on your calendar with a BIG RED PEN!

Project: V13

Developer: Masthead | **ETA:** 2012

After years in development limbo, it appears that the Fallout MMOG known as Project: V13 is back on the release radar. Project: V13 will use the same tech as Earthrise, although Interplay say the new Fallout game will have, and we're quoting here, 'many unique features'.

Final Fantasy XI

Developer: Square-Enix | **ETA:** Out now

Square have announced that the original Final Fantasy MMORPG will be receiving plenty of love in 2010, with three major content updates planned. Vision of Abyssea is schedule for June, Scars of Abyssea will be released in September, while the concluding Heroes of Abyssea should be with us by December.

City of Heroes: Going Rogue

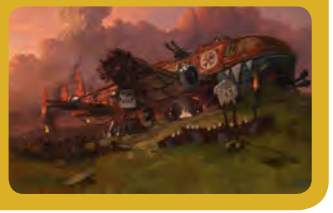
Developer: Paragon Studios | **ETA:** June

NCSoft are taking pre-orders for Going Rogue, which incredibly will be the first expansion to the superhero MMOG since 2005. Aiming to explore the shadow lands between good and evil, the expansion is set in the universe of Praetoria, where rogue police battle with shady vigilantes. With improved graphics, it looks good and sounds just as interesting. More soon!

Warhammer 40,000 Online

Developer: Vigil Games | **ETA:** 2012

It's been no secret that THQ have been overseeing development on a MMOG based on the Games Workshop's tabletop sci-fi battle game. What has been shrouded from us is what form the game will take. The good news is that developers Vigil Games will be revealing at least some of what they've been up to at the E3 games conference in June, at which you can bet we'll have someone keenly taking notes on your behalf.



Lord of the Rings Online

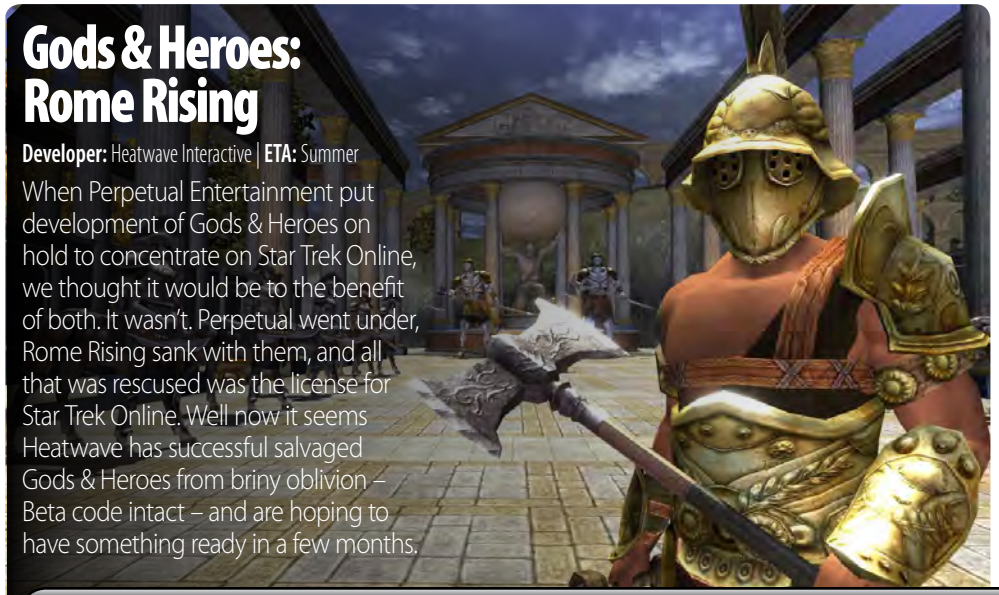
Developer: Turbine | **ETA:** Out now

As well as having one of the best iPhone applications in the form of the LoTRO Herald, Lord of the Rings Online players can now make use of the Player Feed, a Facebook app that logs when you play the game. Friends of European players will be spared the annoyance of having their News Feed filled with LotRO login messages as the app only links with Turbine accounts, not those managed through Codemasters.

Gods & Heroes: Rome Rising

Developer: Heatwave Interactive | **ETA:** Summer

When Perpetual Entertainment put development of Gods & Heroes on hold to concentrate on Star Trek Online, we thought it would be to the benefit of both. It wasn't. Perpetual went under, Rome Rising sank with them, and all that was rescued was the license for Star Trek Online. Well now it seems Heatwave has successful salvaged Gods & Heroes from briny oblivion – Beta code intact – and are hoping to have something ready in a few months.



Cities XL

Developer: Monte Cristo | **ETA:** Out now

After just three months of operation Cities XL's developer has decided to shut down the online 'Planet Offer' portion due to a lack of subscriptions. The single-player game will still be fully functional and a sequel is planned for next year.

ON THE RADAR

2010
- Final Fantasy XIV

NOVEMBER
- World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

JULY
- EVE Online: Tyrannis

APRIL
- Allods Online

Runes of Magic

FREE 2 PLAY MMORPG

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

Features

- Massively-online-role-playing-game without any fixed costs
- Extensive dual class system with 30 combinations available
- Mounts and pets (horses, tigers and many other creatures)
- More than 1,600 quests and quest series embedded in an epic storyline
- Player vs. player fights (battlegrounds, guild- and arena-battles)
- Instances, dungeons, boss and elite opponents as well as raids with up to 36 players
- Versatile spells and attack-skills plus unique elite-skills
- Combination system with hundreds of runes and crafting materials for individualised items
- Player- and guild-housing

"This is one game everyone should try!"

tentonhammer.com

www.RunesofMagic.com

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Age of Conan: Rise of the Godslayer

It's time to take up another Hyborian adventure

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Funcom
Heritage: Anarchy Online, The Longest Journey
Link: www.riseofthegodslayer.com
ETA: Spring 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Age of Conan: Rise of the Godslayer

Funcom's second MMOG packed a lot of promise. Before launch, it won multiple awards at E3, and from the world's top gaming sites. It won Best Original Score at the IFMCA awards (surely you remember?) and the game's composer was nominated for Best Original Score at the Hollywood Music Awards. Weeks before launch it sold out both pre-order copies and Collector's Edition copies, and knocked Grand Theft Auto IV off the charts as the number-one selling game in Germany and Sweden.

Despite the fact that AoC sold hundreds of thousands of copies, many of the players who bought the game couldn't even run it. Others who managed to meet minimum requirements could at least log in, but with slideshow-like frame-rates, it was unplayable. To make matters worse, the game had a severe memory leak that caused constant crashing for players who *could* play.

Funcom also misjudged the way that the 'WoW generation' played games. Developers estimated that it would take 250 hours to reach level 80, yet players were doing it in 48. Gamers had been trained to race to end-game, but Conan had none. The first 30 levels were fun and well designed, but high-level quest content was lacking, end-game content was sparse, and players were bored. Shortly after launch, there was a mass exodus of players and the game was labelled a failure.

Nearly two years have passed now, and the game is maturing nicely. Developers have been focusing on improving the original game, solving existing issues and

"Many of the players who bought Age of Conan couldn't even run it"

Ain't no party like an S-Club party…

It all looks pretty normal here… best start killing some people.

Don't worry, Godslayer will have plenty of blood, and more than a few boobs.

Age of Conan cont.

beefing up content. According to the game's Director, Craig Morrison, the first year was spent solely on addressing existing issues, and an expansion wasn't even considered until those issues were resolved.

Now that they have their house in order, the first expansion, Rise of the Godslayer, has been announced. Funcom is known for thinking outside of the box, and this expansion is a solid example of their atypical perspective. Unlike normal expansions which add more levels and leave old content in the dust, Funcom is thinking laterally. The new content is intended to flesh out the existing game and give players more to do with the characters they have.

Players complained that the instanced content ruined immersion. Funcom has addressed this issue in its new landmass, Khitai. The Asian-themed continent contains zones that are interconnected. Travel NPCs have been removed and players cannot only see the surrounding zones from their current location but they can also move through the border lines from place to place.

They also recognise that the mature, time-limited audience they're aiming for doesn't want to spend hours waiting for other people so that they can play. Most of the new content is intended to be solo-friendly. While the focus is on increasing content for high-level players, there is also added content for lower levels as well. The new race, Khitan, will level 1-20 in Tortage, but from there they move to Khitai to pursue their own destiny quests in content developed for levelling up the characters.

As further encouragement for solo players, new factions are being introduced, each with their own ranks and rewards. These include some amazing armour sets and

OH, LOVE A TWIST

Age of Conan offers a new twist on old ideas…

QUEST SYSTEM **MAP** **USER FRIENDLY**

The quest system is very similar to other popular games, but the quest lines are much more in-depth.

Age of Conan cont.

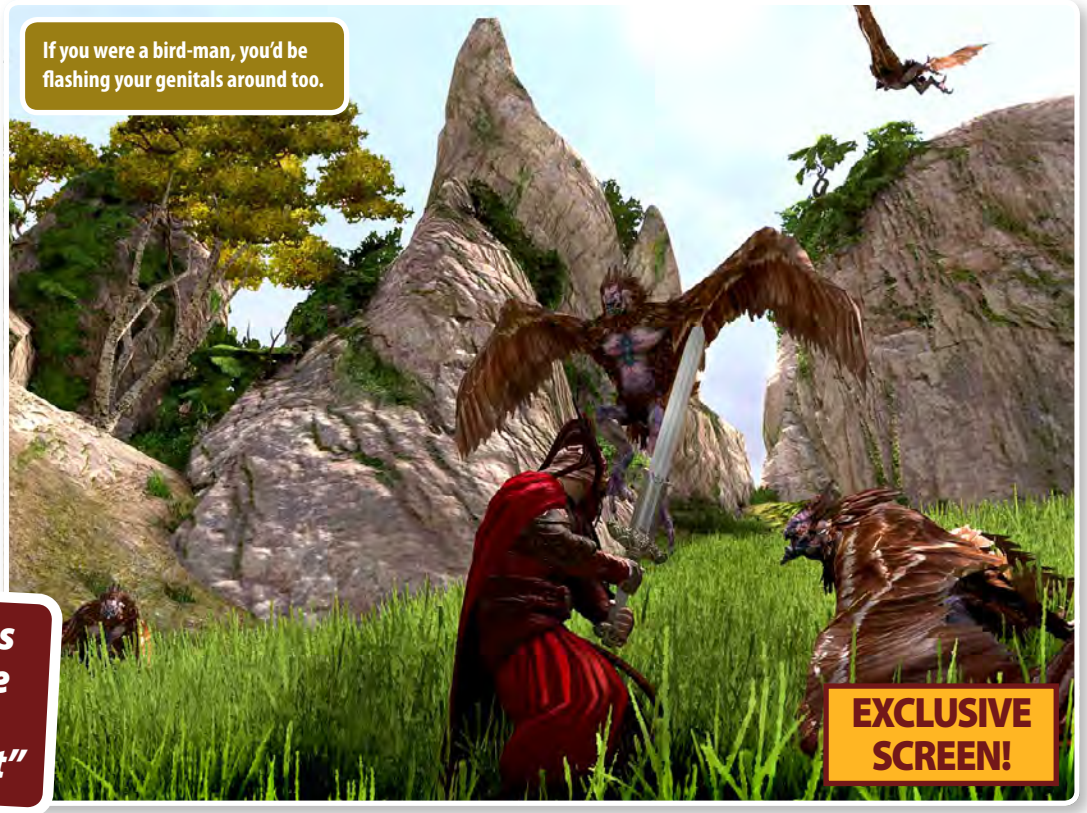
very interesting mounts. The mounts are obtained through special quest chains and must be caught, tamed, raised and trained by the player before they can be ridden. Instead of giving the typical speed increase, the mounts have special abilities such as enabling the player to stealth while riding. The already remarkable combat system is also being enhanced with some fantastic new fighting moves with martial arts flair.

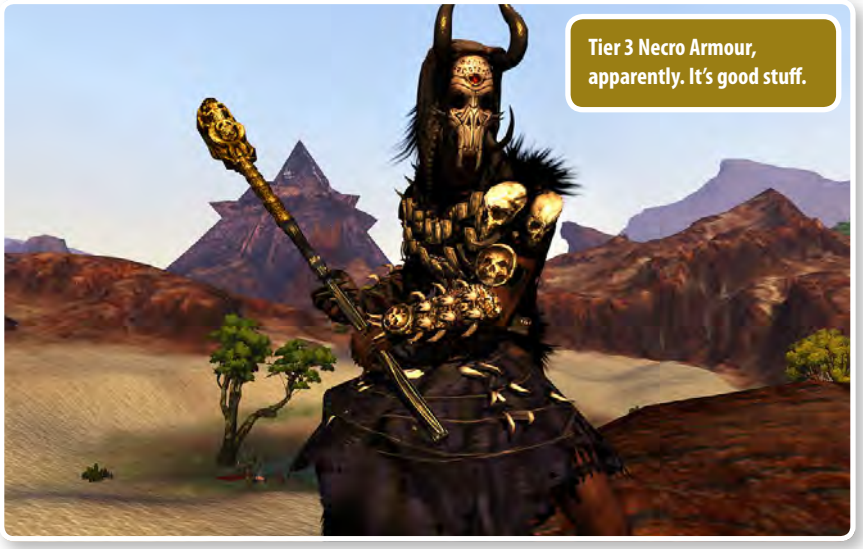
They've also declined to add new classes and instead have introduced an 'Alternate Advancement System'. This system uses experience that players gain from normal activities (questing, raiding, or hunting) and opens up new feat trees, giving players access to a lot of new spells, abilities and combos for their existing characters.

Age of Conan has always displayed the potential to be something different from other fantasy MMOGs. Funcom seems to have spent a great deal of effort attempting to make that potential a reality. With their new project – The Secret Life – receiving so much hype, much will ride on the success of the Rise of the Godslayer expansion. With the ill-fated Hyborian Adventures launch, more of the trouble was due to unrealistic expectations than poor design. Developers simply underestimated their players levelling methods and simply overestimated their computer systems.

As it sits, the game is good, but Rise of the Godslayer has the potential to make Age of Conan one of the best MMO games on the market. The expansion will directly target the mature gamer who has a solid gaming system and who is tired of entry-level MMOGs. People who don't want to stray too far off of the beaten path, but who are looking for new twists on old ideas will likely enjoy it.

"Rise of the Godslayer has the potential to make Age of Conan one of the best MMO games on the market"





MMOZine Verdict

Enjoyable, but we're not entirely sure who the game is likely to appeal to

HOW COMPLETE

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Mytheon

Of gods and mortals

Publisher: Petroglyph
Developer: True Games Interactive
Heritage: Universe at War: Earth Assault, Star Wars: Empire at War
Link: www.mytheon game.com
ETA: Spring 2010

Lore is the driving force of many an MMO, from Aion and Guild Wars to LotRO and WoW. You might know everything there is to know about the Dragonflights of Azeroth or the Empyrean Lords of Atreia but what do you know about the mythologies that have inspired fantasy MMOs? Probably not a lot but the real world has plenty of ancient cultures to draw upon, and this is where Mytheon – the new freemium MMO published by Petroglyph – comes in.

Rather than set their game on an alien planet or a in a realm filled with faeries and sprites, Mytheon is grounded in ancient Earth and the rich lore found in ancient religions. But there's a twist, as in this version of Earth, the gods are not just abstract deities watching from

The world is dangerous and filled with unpleasant denezins.

It just wouldn't be a fantasy MMO without a giant spider or two.

MYTHOLOGY 101: THE FATES

The Fates have an important role to play in Mytheon, not least because of the mythology it is based on. Traditionally a trinity of goddesses, the Fates – or Moirae in Greek and Parcae in Latin – were three sisters named Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos who wielded the supreme power over god and mortal alike. The youngest sister wove thread (representing a human life), the middle sister measured out the length and the eldest cut the thread, thus ending that mortal's existence. Gods might be immortal but their fate was something they could not control.

They could be killed (even if such a thing was rare) and only the Fates knew when. Similarly, the idea of a trinity of goddesses associated with life, death and fate is not just found in Greece. The Norns of Norse myth were similar, being both goddesses of destiny and also of the past, present and future.

A firey locale, the Isle of Oblivion is not for the faint-hearted.

Be careful not to look directly at this image, or Medusa might turn you to stone.

Mytheon continued

on high, oh no. In the world of Mytheon, the gods are very active, and meddling happily in the lives of puny mortals. And they meddle a lot. Fortunately there is a power in the universe to which even the gods must bow, and that's the three sisters known as the Fates.

The Fates have decided the time of the gods is ending and it's now the turn of mortals to take the spotlight. As a result, you take the role of a hero who is armed with conventional weapons and magic but also something more mystical. Each of the classes – of which three have been revealed – have been given magical Power Stones by the Fates which allow them to unleash spells, heal their friends or summon the denizens of myth. These stones were created from a mystical ore which also serves as the game's title, and there are many to collect.

The three classes in the game – the Warcasters, the Elementalists and the Eidolon – are each very different. The first are humanity's champions (and an obvious Warrior archetype) in the end-game against the gods, while Mytheon's incarnation of the Mage class are able to create devastating spells but their magical ability is soon spent. Finally there are the Paladin-like Eidolon who once lived in harmony with their deities, Isis and Horus, who now side with humanity in the war.

INTO UNEXPLORED LANDS

Join us as we venture into classical Greece

ARGOS | **COLCHIS** | **ECHIDNA'S SWAMP**

A mix of real and mythical locations, Argos is a real town that took part in the Peloponnesian War.

"The gods are very active and meddling happily in the lives of puny mortals"

Unlike most MMOs, where you play in first- or third-person, Mytheon takes a difference stance. Namely looking down from on high – the god's eye view as it where. While this does divorce you from your avatar, it makes the game a

Mytheon continued

little more interesting and gives an original perspective on the in-game world, which at the moment focuses on Ancient Greece.

The world of Mytheon is rich but also based on ancient cultures and their monsters. As a result, the game world mixes all those fascinating cultures we learned about at school with the monsters Hollywood just loves to recreate – and 2010 is all ready turning out to be the Year of Greek Mythology, what with Clash of the Titans and Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief. Harpies and Minotaurs roam the land, and even Poseidon himself has been known to rise from the ocean to smite the unwary hero.

When the game launches, Greece is very much the focus but later expansions will go beyond the Classical World and the rich lands of Egypt, heading towards Eastern lands. For now, Mytheon promises the chance to fight Centaurs and gods, spy Naiads and demi-gods, and also the terrifying Echidna. The magical Mytheon Stones allow for diversity in characters while also appealing to our innate desire to collect things. The Stones allow for spells – some of which are class specific – and magical skills. You can summon allies, and if you wanted your own Pegasus, well get the right stone and now you can have one.

For a freemium title, Mytheon looks gorgeous and has a very different slant from most MMOs. The use of ancient lands rich in myth and monsters feels a lot more familiar than some alien planet. Indeed, there's aspects of the game's lore which will be familiar to everyone and this is accentuated by the Diablo II-esque perspective, which lets you be a part of the action but also allows you to see enraged monsters as they charge up to you. We're eagerly awaiting its release later this year, because after all, how often do you get to take on gods and monsters in the same game?

"The world of Mytheon is rich but also based on ancient cultures and their monsters"

This guy might look like a pushover but looks can be decieving.

Monsters walk through the world and it's your job to face them.

MMOZine Verdict

Pokémon meets Clash of the Titans with a dash of Diablo II

HOW COMPLETE

80%

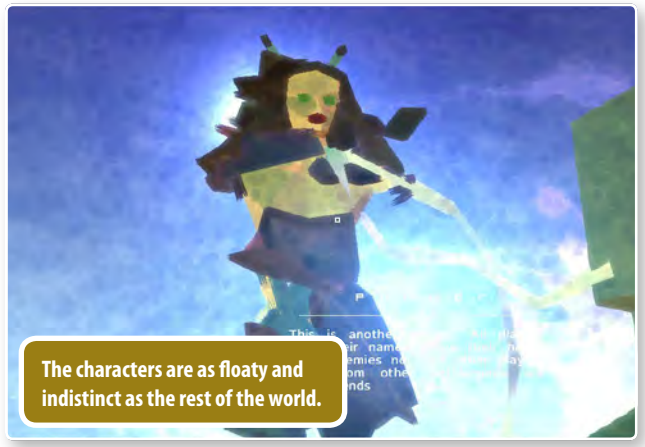
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

70%

Love

Publisher: N/A
Developer: Eskil Steenberg
Link: www.quelsolaar.com
ETA: 24th March

The moderately multiplayer game created by just one person

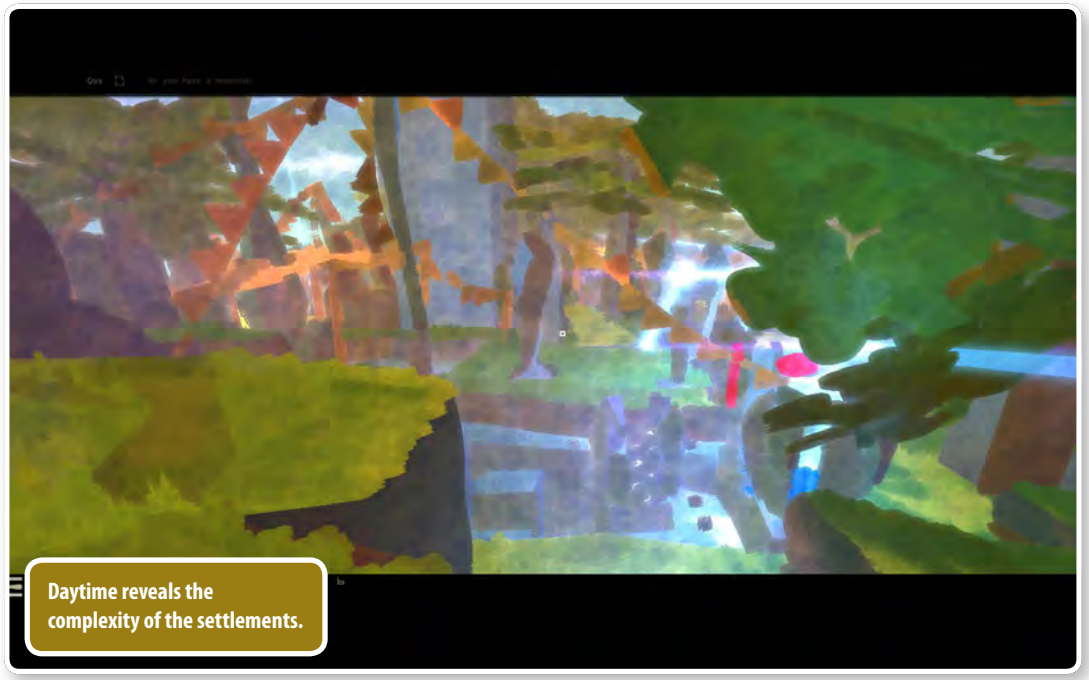

The characters are as floaty and indistinct as the rest of the world.

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Love

It's likely you'll have heard of Eskil Steenberg's project by now: the one-man studio employing his formidable talents as a graphics programmer and software tools wizard to create a small-scale MMO. It's the kind of project that the press can't help writing about: beautiful, esoteric images, weird ideas, but all within the familiar framework of the persistent world. Steenberg's intention was to create a game that was both visually unique, created procedurally by his programs, and populated and furnished by the resident players. It's a project that takes on so much that is cutting edge about game design in 2010 – relying on code to create worlds, relying on gamers to create content – and pours them all into a single breathtaking experience.

But what's it really like? Having spent some time in the rapidly evolving Beta stage of the game, we're now in a position to tell you. Love is like other games, but unlike any other *individual* game. Movement, unusually for game that is sitting in the MMO bracket, is fast-paced and closer to Quake 3 than World of Warcraft. Your first moments within the world consist of running about madly, leaping and strafing, and probably realising that this is a game about movement and exploration as much as anything else. This extends out to combat, which is that of a real-time shooter. You are armed with various weapons – blasters and such – and engage in projectile combat. This is where the 'moderately' multiplayer aspect

"Love is like other games, but unlike any other individual game"


Daytime reveals the complexity of the settlements.

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Perhaps the most peculiar thing about Love's world is that it is actually spherical. Rather than going on adventures across a flat plane, you are actually moving around a tiny planet. Walk for long enough in any single direction and you'll come back to where you started.

Power nodes link across the landscape and light it all up.

Bumping into another player for the first time can be surreal. Is that a *person*?

Love continued

of the game comes in: there's a maximum of around 200 players on any individual server, so it doesn't get too laggy in combat.

The game itself is a battle between players and the AI. The players must scour the landscape for tokens which can be used to create settlements. The AI are also building settlements, and they will attack player settlements wherever they find them. The objective for the players is to build and defend these settlements. Building is done by deformation of the landscape. Within the radius of the settlement players are able to raise or lower the terrain, to dig through, it and to smooth it out, all by virtue of various discovered tokens. The aim of much of the game, therefore, is procuring these tokens and making them available to other players in the settlement. There's no player versus player combat in the game, although there is the potential for griefing, thanks to the way that players can change the landscape around the settlement. A griefing gun (excellent!), and temporary imprisonment, is the suggested antidote for such behaviour.

Base building takes up a lot more time than combat, overall, because there's so much to do. Most importantly, bases have features – such as turrets and elevators – that require power. There are power wells and nodes all across the landscape,

"The players must scour the landscape for tokens which can be used to create settlements"

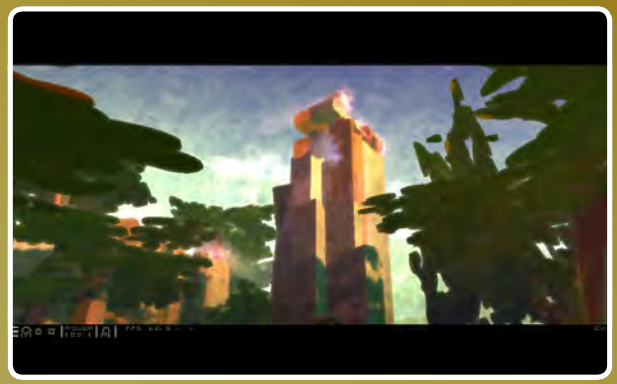
and these can be hooked up to your base via a co-ordinate system. This same system is employed in numerous systems across the game, and can even remotely control

SETTLING IN

Everything you need to know to get your supplement up and running in style

FINDING A TOKEN | **SETTLEMENT MONOLITH** | **WELL DEFENDED**

Often a settlement will have already been constructed on the server you are in. If not, then it's down to you to find a token.



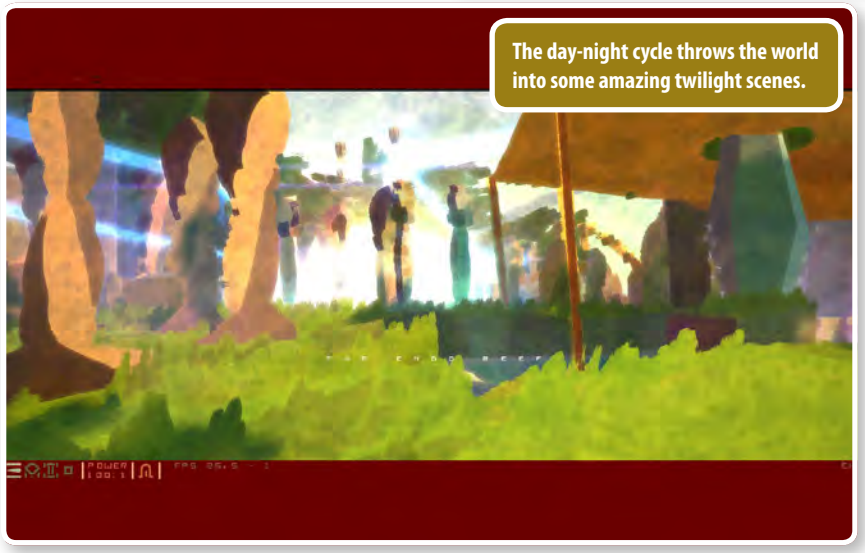
Love continued

some devices via a radio. All these bits and pieces of equipment reply on tokens embedded in a base to spawn them, and that means exploring the world around you.

Visually speaking, Love's world is an exquisite experience – smoky and painterly, but also often unclear, which means an occasional fatal plunge into a watery grave is a regular pitfall. In a world of games aiming for realism and high-fidelity crispness, this is a deliberately fuzzy experience. It's like playing in some kind of impressionistic artwork – things are blurred, and the abstract visuals are all part of what makes it so appealing. The audio, which has only recently been properly implemented, is fairly rudimentary, but it's entirely appropriate to the ambient feel of the game. In terms of the look and feel of the game, there's nothing else quite like it.

That's not to say Love doesn't have some problems. The lack of PvP will be a major stumbling block for many players – the AI enemies are fairly competent, but they are, of course, no match to playing against real human minds. Nor is the end-game all that satisfying, because the building and defence of the settlement is an end in itself. Of course, it's possible to build incredibly beautiful and elaborate constructions, with windows, arches, complex labyrinths and beautiful grids of connecting power systems, but it does feel like the game needs something more – perhaps ranking systems to recognise achievements and allow players to see their impact on the world. Even without these things, it's worth plunging into Love and taking a look. It's a small, helpful community, and the experience is unusual enough that it's worth checking out for its own sake. The game hasn't yet been priced for its March 24th release, but there's every reason to expect it to be relatively cheap, with buddy invite options as you have in the current Beta setup.

"Visually speaking, Love's world is an exquisite experience"



MMOZine Verdict

Creative massively multiplayer experience that's unlike anything else out there

HOW COMPLETE

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

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Waiting for Godslayer

A new age for Conan and friends beckons…

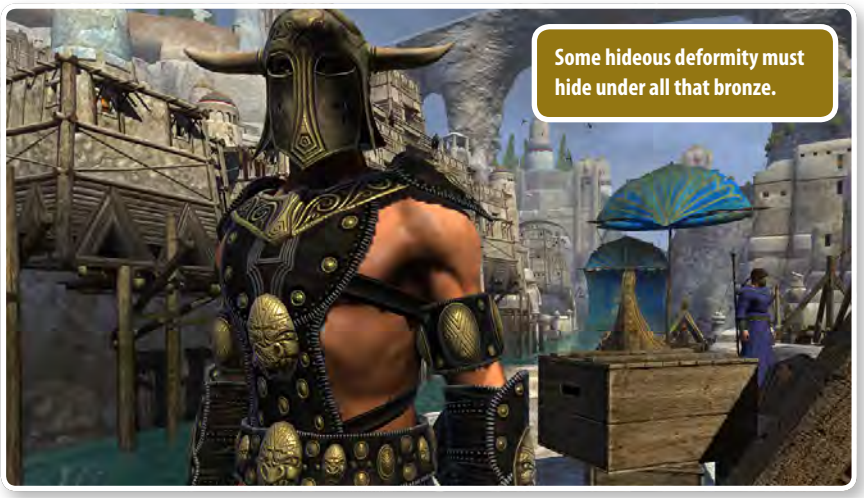
"We have improved the game in many ways, with lots of great new features and content"

The history of Funcom's second MMORPG could have been as short and as tragic as that of the man who came up with Conan in the first place, but with an expansion planned for the summer, the future for Hyboria has never looked more solid. We sit down with Craig Morrison, Game Director on Age of Conan, to find out when it all started going right…

Why has it taken so long for this first expansion to arrive for Conan?
I think that's mainly because we focused on live game updates for the first year after the launch of the game. We are comfortable that it was the right strategy, as there were some important things we had to address that were brought up after launch before we could consider an expansion.

Can you tell us how has the storyline been adapted to integrate new Khitan players into the existing content?
Khitan players will find they have their own Seer character who will progress the destiny quest for them.

Can you give us more details on the alternate advancement system that's now in place?
That would probably be an article all on its own! There is quite a lot there, and you will see more detailed previews coming up as we get closer to launch. We are aiming for providing players with new abilities, spells and combos that add new further depth to the combat system. Now that we have deployed the revamped items and statistics update we have a much greater number of options for us to play with, and we want to build on that. The focus will be on providing more situational and interesting abilities that mean players can take advantage of the strengths and


Some hideous deformity must hide under all that bronze.

And these are just the kittens.

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN!

Interview continued

weakness of their opponents. At a basic level, the alternate advancement system allows players to earn new Advancement Points that they can then spend in brand new feat trees. These feat trees include a lot of new abilities, functionality and also choices for their characters.

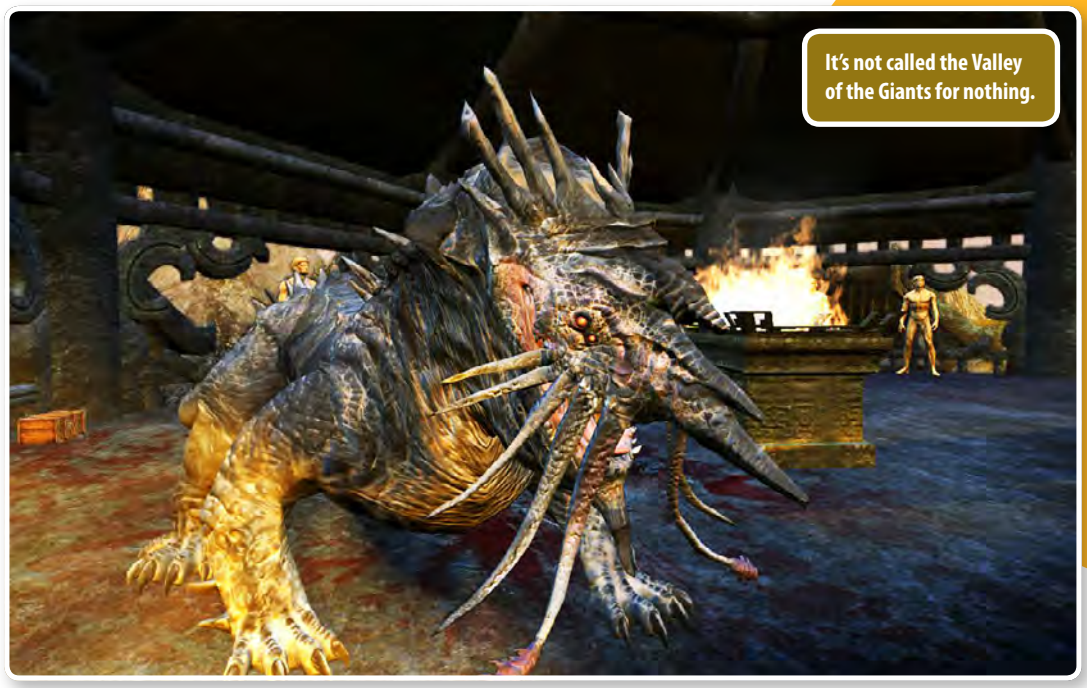
The expansion is primarily PvE focused, and PvP changes are planned for free updates. Will any of the new content impact player versus player interactions, and if so, how?
The new abilities, skills, combos and spells in the new alternate advancement system will obviously affect PvP as well, but the content itself isn't based around PvP. As you noted, the new PvP systems will be coming with live game updates, like the new Shrines of Bori feature that is currently in testing.

"I don't think the relative success or failure of other titles, perceived or otherwise, really changes how we look at our game"

Are there any plans to make Conan truly seamless, with only instanced dungeons?
No, it is very unlikely you will ever see that. The technology required to allow us to build the fantastic level of detail that goes into our playfield is simply too resource heavy to support an open-world with current technology platforms. That was a very conscious decision relatively early on for the project, and I think the graphical splendour of our game world demonstrates the merits of that decision.

At a fundamental level, I don't believe the layout of the new playfield would detract from anyone wanting to take part in PvP in the open world. These areas are massive, with far more playable space than any of the previous areas in the game.

What would you say to players who left the game shortly after launch but who are considering taking a new look at AoC?
To come back and judge for themselves! I can sit here all day and say how wonderful it all is, or what we have improved, or how much work we have put in…



It's not called the Valley of the Giants for nothing.

How could anything nasty ever live somewhere so pleasant?

Interview continued

none of that compares to trying it out for yourself. We have improved the game in many ways, with lots of great new features and content, I never expect people to just take my word for it, so the best thing I can say to them is to try out one of the trial offerings and see for themselves!

In light of the high-profile MMO games that have been released since Conan (specifically Warhammer, Aion and Champions Online – all of which have received a great deal of criticism), how do you look back on Conan's launch?

I don't think the relative success or failure of other titles, perceived or otherwise, really changes how we look at our game. I have always been focused on the strengths and weaknesses of our own title. We worked hard to improve on those areas that were weak and to add to and strengthen those areas in which it excelled.

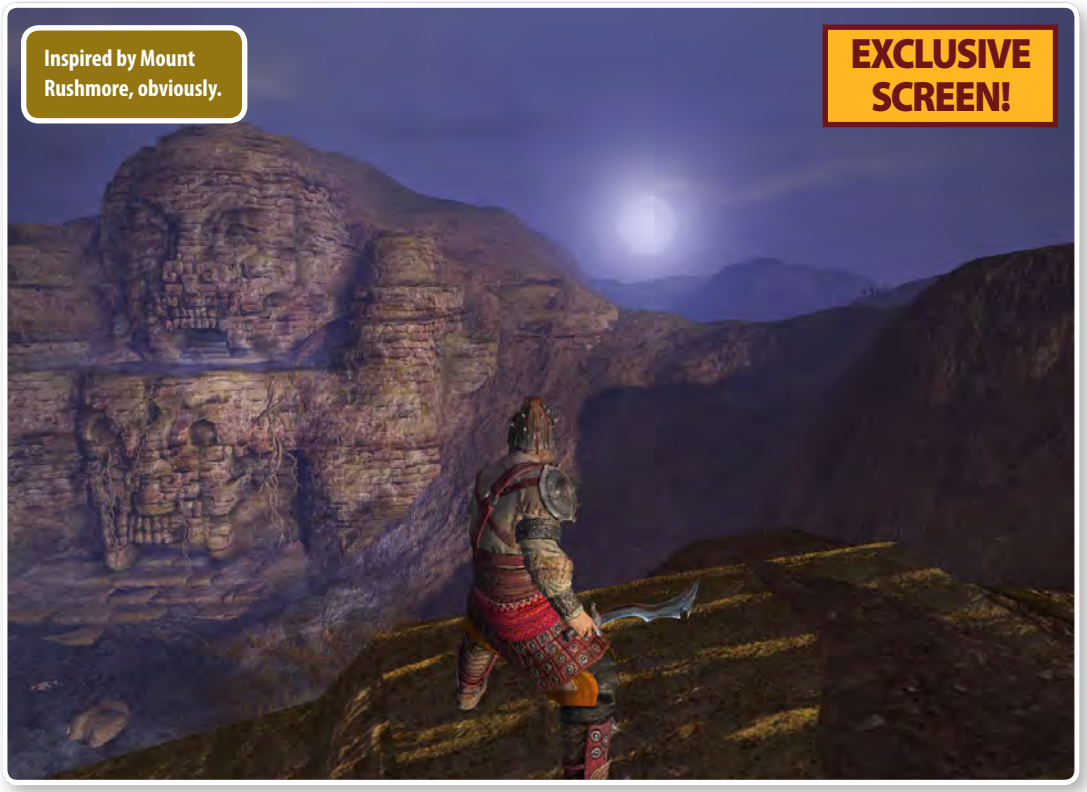
Personally, I think it shows how high the bar has been set these days. That people would consider Aion, for example, as a failure is a little scary, as it had a good launch, was solid and polished and has kept a high number of subscribers so far. Perhaps at a top level it does show that people are open to new MMOs, as all the new titles seem to be able to sell well initially.

"I don't think the relative success or failure of other titles, perceived or otherwise, really changes how we look at our game"

Rather than just wanting something different to the industry leader, players actually want something better, and when your launch product needs to be better than a mature title with over five years of expansions and content additions, that is a tall order. Now on a niche level, you can be different and succeed in appealing to a certain group of players. I think things like our combat system allow us to appeal as a different type of game to World of Warcraft, but that also means we maybe won't ever compete on the same level in the mass market because more people like the other style. It is definitely a challenge for the industry. Time will also change that dimension though and more avenues will open up to more games.

I don't think anyone will make a better World of Warcraft than World of Warcraft, but games will come that will be good (if not better) MMO titles in their own rights. Those titles might aim at a niche market and have no aspirations for the mass market, some might try and challenge for that mass market appeal as well. I really hope there is room in the future for both flavours of development.

New foes, all of which will expire in arcs of blood.



Inspired by Mount Rushmore, obviously.

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN!

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Funcom
Heritage: Anarchy Online
Link: www.funcom.com
ETA: 2010

Compo

WIN! PLAY AGE OF CONAN FREE FOR LIFE!

Never splash out again for your barbarian thrills!

Courtesy of Funcom, we have two lifetime accounts to give away for Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures, plus copies of the Rise of the Godslayer expansion when it becomes available later this year.

In order to be in with a chance of winning all you have to do is answer the following question correctly…

Competition closes 19/04/2010. See website for full T&Cs.

Publisher: Hi-Rez Studios
Developer: Hi-Rez Studios
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.globalagendagame.com
OUT NOW

Global Agenda

Make the world a better place, please?

Starting a new character in any online game is a tedious process at the best of times, but in Global Agenda it's especially so. Though you start at level 5, and reaching level 10 only takes a few hours (at most) it's hard to remember a less-appealing starter period in any MMO. The problem is that there is fundamentally nothing to do apart from explore Dome City, which takes all of five minutes, or get in line to fight in grind PvE missions.

In themselves, these missions are pretty good fun, with four-player co-operative gameplay that lets you immediately gauge the make-up of a good squad and who the team-players are, helped by the fact that spawns that are almost always the right make-up to challenge any team.

With a couple of medics in the rear, an assault is bound to succeed.

Corridor missions

The problem is that the variety of PvE corridor missions is so few that within 20 minutes you will have seen then all. Jump into the next tier of PvE and a new but similarly thin spread of maps present themselves. Is it really any worse than slaughtering wolves in Dun Morogh? Probably not, but at the end of the day this is a shooter, in which the rush of adrenaline should wash away the repetition and familiarity. Sadly, it doesn't.

As any Global Agenda player will tell you, PvE is not where the action is, which is thankfully true. In fact,

Teamwork is essential to PvE missions.

Payload missions are probably the best, and no subscription required.

Global Agenda cont.

PvP is this game's saving grace and something you can engage in from the get-go. If you've played any multiplayer shooter you'll know what to expect - point control maps, bomb tug-o-war, assault... Standard stuff played between a dozen or so blues versus a comparable team of reds. The difference between Global Agenda's combat, and, say Team Fortress 2 (which is the game that draws the most comparisons) is that Hi-Rez's game nods more toward RPG-concepts with ability timers, buffs and debuffs just as central to gameplay as shooting people in the face. (Which, by the way, won't be any more effective that a shot to the leg - no hit zones you see.)

Corridor missions

Harder to recommend though, is the Conquest mode, a persistence campaign to which you must subscribe. We had high hopes for it after the developers revealed that EVE's alliance wars were the inspiration, but even accounting for the genre switch and extreme reduction in scale and scope, it seems an overblown comparison. Perhaps over the course of months and years of the game's life then the players can colour the landscape and create some history, but as it is now, the to-ing and fro-ing across the various hexes isn't much fun. The amount of effort required to contest a map just in terms of organising a strike force might be worthwhile if the process of

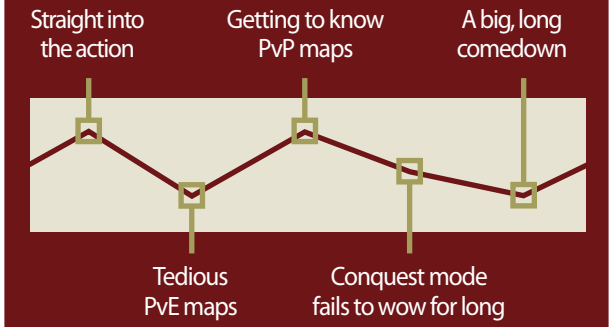
FANTASTIC FOUR

Global Agenda only features four player classes, but they are pretty good…

ROBOTICS **RECON** **ASSAULT/ MEDIC**

Able to activate shield walls, build turrets and medical dispensers, the Robotics class is able to erect a stout defence and consolidate advances.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life


Straight into the action
Getting to know PvP maps
A big, long comedown
Tedious PvE maps
Conquest mode fails to wow for long

Global Agenda cont.

attacking and defending were any more interesting than a regular point control map, which you don't have to subscribe to in order to play, so why bother in the first place? Conquest just isn't very inclusive, or in any sense uniquely thrilling.

Dome City is as open-world as Global Agenda gets. It's the hub of the game and is a soulless, pointless place. It's where you begin the game and from where you run around vendor booths looking at armour that you can't afford that offers no tangible benefit when you find you have the credits to eventually pay for it. The best that can be said about it is that it's a decent 3D lobby, but most players would really rather have a server list and a few icons.

It would have been far better had the hub been the VR practice arena, which is a far more interesting place to hang out while you're waiting for something more meaningful to do. Unfortunately, if you try to hang out in the Arena – in which you can at least shoot and try out flying – after a mission you are dumped back at Dome central. At the very least, we hope the developers move a few rooms about.

It's going to take a lot of effort in a lot of different areas to mould Global Agenda into the shooter/MMO hybrid we all imagined it would be, or one worthy of a monthly fee. Thankfully, the action foundations are pretty solid and the player classes supremely well balanced. As an online multiplayer game you can enjoy and progress through during short bursts, you can't help but relent to just having fun with it. Just make sure that you don't push yourself to play too fast or too often, because if you try to treat Global Agenda like any other MMO then it will just treat you with contempt. ●

THE BRICK FACTOR

If you come from an MMO background angle and had perhaps given shooters a wide berth due to there being too many l33t skills kids picking you off, Global Agenda offers a solid and refreshing change, one where low level characters can contribute. If we were lazy we'd call it a casual shooter, but we're not, so we'll say that Global Agenda is to shooters what a set of Duplo bricks is to scale architecture. Actually, some of the levels do look boxy now that we come to mention it…

MMOZine Verdict

A solid shooter foundation, but a shell of an MMO

- ✓ Just like the jet packs, fun in short bursts
- ✗ Multiplayer, but far from massive
- ✗ Desperately seeking depth and content

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Cryptic Studios
Heritage: Champions Online, City of Heroes
Link: www.startrekonline.com
OUT NOW

Star Trek Online

It's Trek Jim, but not as we know it…

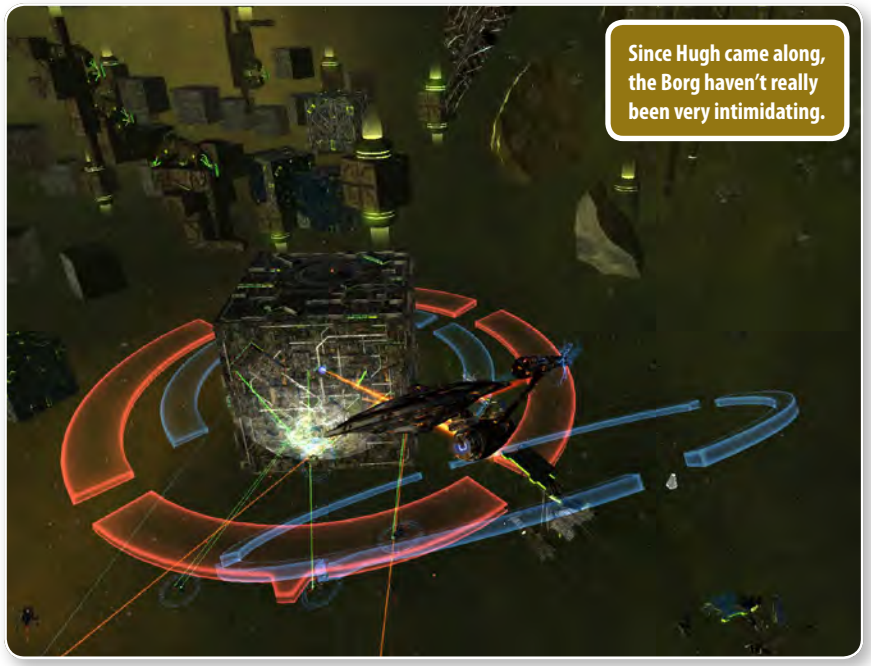
Last issue we went deeply into what Star Trek Online is. How it works, what you do, where you go and how you look. Rather than rehash old ground (last issue is only a mouse click away, after all), let's just say that the full release has barely changed from the worryingly thin-looking Beta, and that Star Trek Online is splitting opinions among everyone who plays it. Not, we hasten to add, splitting that opinion along a love/hate line. Sadly, it's more of a hate with a passion/tolerate until something better comes along line instead.

The full release of STO hasn't fixed any of the deep-rooted problems that plagued Beta, from the horrible misuse of the setting – cramming tried, tested and now long-tired MMO grind staples into a universe that just doesn't work that way, eschewing any of the core values of Trek (character, story, emotional engagement) for a simplistic and quickly repetitive combat engine – to a completely under-developed Klingon experience, a lack of variety in actual mission content, and having little-to-no endgame to speak of.

What does it do right? Certainly it looks pretty. The ship and character models and planet locations all look spectacular, despite the over-abundance of colourful laser beams and glowing power effects turning everything into a Jean-Michel Jarre concert from the late 90s. There's a lot of fun to be had with character creation and this is extended from the Champions Online model here by

Well, double dumb-ass on you!

You have to admit, that's a rather pretty ship.


Since Hugh came along, the Borg haven't really been very intimidating.

It sounds great, it looks great, but…

U.S.S Pumpernickel escapes the Vortex of Death.

Star Trek Online cont.

letting you customise your ship and crewmates as well as your own get-up.

But for all the technical finery, the simple truth is that as it stands, as a game, Star Trek Online simply isn't worth a monthly subscription of anyone's money. The content isn't there, the level of professionalism isn't there, the appeal for either Star Trek fans or simply gaming fans isn't there, and the sense of any kind of appealing gameplay isn't there. What's worse is that all the individual design decisions that make up the greater fail are going to prevent STO from ever becoming worth a monthly fee. With the selected core mechanics now in place, all Cryptic can do is just add more of the same content (but with higher DPS output requirements) and different graphical components.

A flawed structure

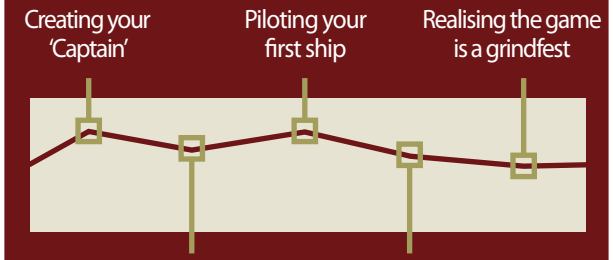
The underlying structure of the game is going to remain as is, and it's that structure that is flawed from the outset. No amount of extra high-level missions is going to change the fact that space combat is a repetitive chore of Pavlovian button pushing with a fancy interface masking the lack of any genuine challenge, actual tactical necessity during combat or adherence to the actualities of Star Trek combat. Nor will it disguise the embarrassingly poor ground mission engine that for a game released in 2010 – even an MMO game – is shockingly insulting to both the rich legacy of the licence it is based upon and the expectations of a game

that requires a regular visit to your bank account.

Cryptic knows it hasn't had to try here, and that's perhaps the most insulting thing of all. It's hurriedly slapped a basic game engine onto a lucrative licence in order to get it out on shelves while the coattails of the new movie are still rideable. It's also known that all it has to do is include as many nods to Trek touchstones as it can – regardless of whether they make any sense from a gameplay point of view – to snare in the fanboys. Half the references in the game feel so forced, so contrived just so the

Guess who had his Ready Brek this morning?

PULSOMETER: Signs of life


Creating your 'Captain'
Piloting your first ship
Realising the game is a grindfest
Borg? In a tutorial?
Realising your missions are all the same

Star Trek Online cont.

game can say "Look, it's suchandsuch! That's cool, right? And there's so-and-so from episode X of series Y! How great is that, eh?" Well, it isn't great and it's not cool in the slightest. It's fanboy service with no purpose or reason. It's C-3PO being built by Anakin Skywalker, if I might jump universes for a moment. It's the product of lazy designers with no faith in their own ability to tell a captivating story or create an engrossing gameworld.

Annoyingly, the draw of the licence will be enough for many people, and that number will no doubt be significant enough to make this a commercial (if not critical) success. What galls more than that is because it will be deemed by the publisher and its accounts department to be a financially viable entity, the servers will stay up, the licence will stay in place and those of us that really, really want a decent, worthwhile multiplayer Star Trek experience are going to go on wanting for many years to come, and all the while this travesty of a wasted opportunity will sit there, servers taunting us, grinding our dreams into dust. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the definition of the no-win scenario. For gamers anyway.

SIGHT SEEING

We explore the STO hotspots so you don't have to…

Deep Space 9, a greater hive of scum and villany… oh wait, wrong franchise.

Quark's Bar, the bridge, Odo's office, but best of all, the Orbs of the Prophets.

How lovely does Earth look from spacedock?

The rocky majesty of Vulcan – resolutely not blown up in the Star Trek Online timeline.

Here's a blast from the past. Put your hands together for… The Guardian of Time!

MMOZine Verdict

A tragic waste of a stunning licence. A great shame

- ✓ Always fun customising your ship/crew
- ✗ Completely misses what makes Trek 'Trek'
- ✗ Shallow, repetitive and boring gameplay

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Welcome to the Apocalypse

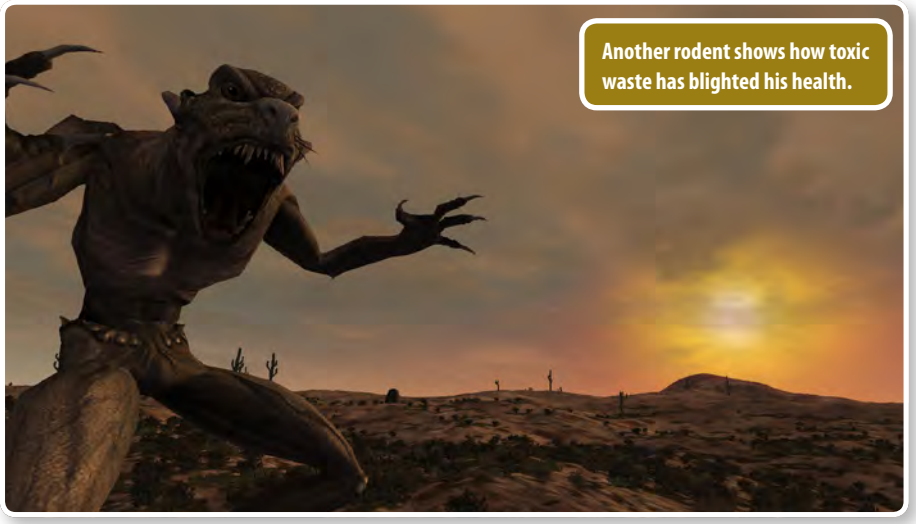
Six months into its release, how has Fallen Earth been received? And what plans are there for its future?

Colin Dwan is the Project Manager on Fallen Earth, a sandbox MMOG released last year without much fanfare, but one that has been enjoying solid reviews and praise from its loyal community ever since. If MMOZine gave out awards, it might have won MMOG of the year. But we don't, so it didn't.

Are you pleased with how Fallen Earth has been generally received by the gaming public?
Well, it can be really hard to read critiques of your game, but as a whole we've been very pleased and encouraged with the results. We've received great scores, and even the harshest critics acknowledge that Fallen Earth is a unique game that deserves a shot. Players are getting into the game and really making it their own – from player-run newspapers to car dealerships and, of course, some great clans.

Are you happy with the state of the game today?
I'm very pleased with where we are. Our team has done a great job doing double duty by juggling typical launch stabilisation with a ton of new content in four short months. At the same time, we are never completely finished with the game and fully intend to keep developing content in all areas. We've already improved the new player training experience and will continue to amp up low-level content to make sure new players really feel like they're in the apocalypse from the start.

"We've received great scores and even the harshest critics acknowledge that Fallen Earth is a unique game that deserves a shot"



Another rodent shows how toxic waste has blighted his health.

Jenny wondered whether personal hygiene was becoming an issue in their relationship.

Interview continued

We will also be releasing new higher-level content with a raised level cap and more fleshed out high-level activities. Additional PvP and PvE features will provide new aspects of life in the apocalypse for players to engage in.

What has been the biggest misconception some players have had when playing the game?

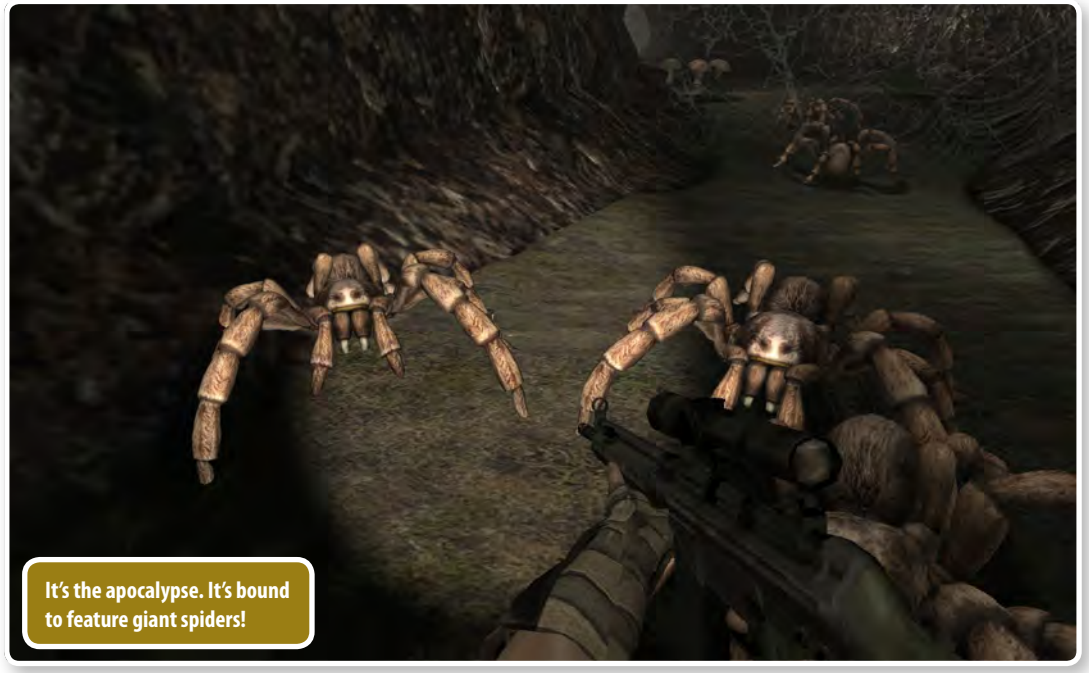
"We've got a smaller community, but they do an amazing job of making the world really come alive"

Many popular MMOs use a heavy 'theme park' pacing to their play style. We definitely provide a different method of enjoying the world. We're often called a sandbox environment, but work hard to make sure we don't just drop you in the middle of the desert. Our goal is to provide missions and directed content in a way that would inspire you to imitate those themes out in the rest of the sandbox world we've set up. Once players latch on to these themes, they've really had their eyes opened to our world.

How would you describe the Fallen Earth player community?

We've got a smaller community, but they do an amazing job of making the world really come alive. The help channel is always full of great players taking some time

Colin wasn't so poor that he didn't at least have two sticks to rub together.


It's the apocalypse. It's bound to feature giant spiders!

En guard!

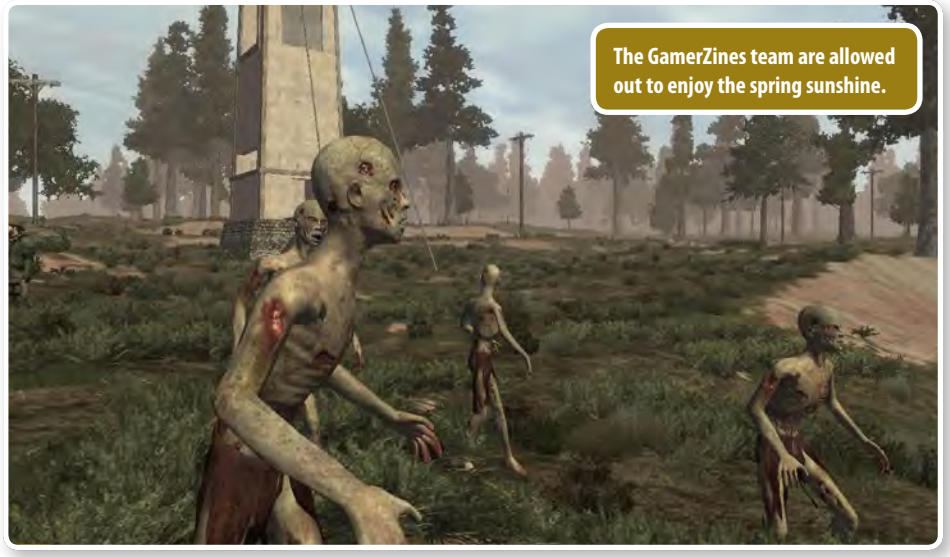
Interview continued

to welcome people into the world. There are great clans for all the different play styles, but at the same time plenty of people that enjoy just playing alone. It really does feel like a frontier as these folks find their way in the Grand Canyon and try to rebuild the world.

You released Fallen Earth in interesting times (the rise of the free-to-play MMO, the plethora of big budget, big license MMOGs). Has it been a struggle, and do you foresee troubling times ahead?
I think the key has been identifying our role in the space and sitting comfortably in it. We are not expecting to be all things to all people or the biggest, flashiest game that absolutely everyone tries on launch week then never again. We are often compared to EVE Online – take a slow and steady approach by keeping your smaller customer base loyal and consistently releasing great content month after month. While we may not have advertising takeovers on every website or TV ads, we feel confident that our genre, our team and our community will naturally attract interest and prove, over time, that there is room out there for an indie MMO.

"We make great games because we want to share an experience or set of emotions"

The Smashing Pumpkins have really let themselves go.


The GamerZines team are allowed out to enjoy the spring sunshine.

What plans do you have for the game over the next few months?
We have a series of great patches that should impact the game across multiple level ranges and play styles and improve the quality of the game overall. We will be raising the level cap, improving low-level areas, upgrading combat, introducing new PvP features, a new achievement system, and endless pages of new quests, dungeons, bug fixes, and general polish features. Our goal is to take a holistic look at the game and how it sells the apocalypse, then continue to hammer those features home. Sometimes that means going back and improving existing content and sometimes that means expanding the known world with new areas for players to explore.

Can we expect an expansion before the end of the year?
It's only March for crying out loud! We have plenty of content planned for this year and will eventually move on to expansions, but there's no word on that yet.

What do you hope to be celebrating when Fallen Earth is a year old?
One million subscribers! No, I'm just looking forward to seeing our planned features and content get released. I feel confident that we can start pulling in some folks that are on the fence. There is an undeniable intrigue about the apocalypse and I just hope we can share that vision with more people.

We make games because we want to share an experience or set of emotions. If we can continue sharing that with more people, I will be happy as a game developer.

FALLEN EARTH

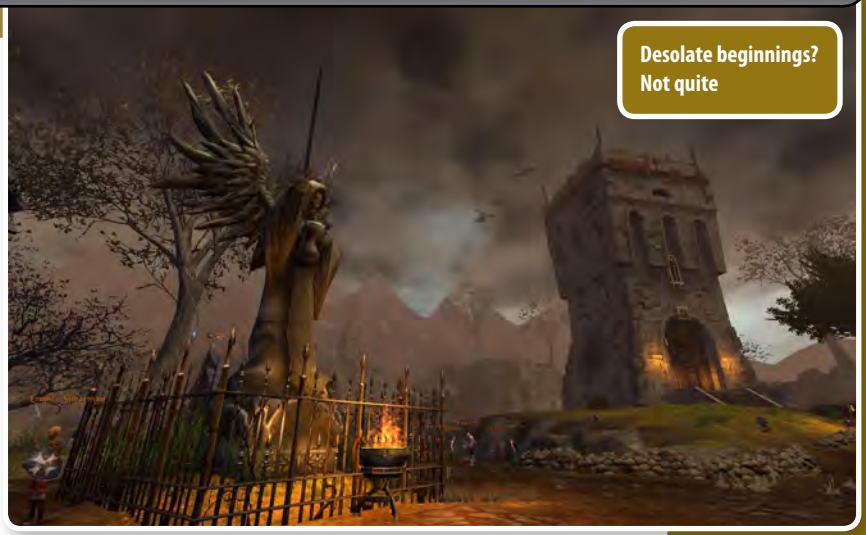
Publisher: SouthPeak
Developer: Icarus
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.fallenearth.com
OUT NOW

PLAY AGAIN

Around a world in 14 days*

(*or however long the trail period lasts)

Part 6: Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning


Desolate beginnings? Not quite

Richie Shoemaker wonders if Warhammer still needs a little bit more waaagh …

The world of Warhammer offers as dramatic and visceral a take on Tolkien's fantasy myth as can be found anywhere. Developed over the course of decades to serve sublime tabletop games, the fiction has been cautiously prodded and poked into all-too infrequent and ill-fitting digital tributes almost since the beginning. Warhammer Online, with its unceasing combat and pleasingly chunky characters and locales, is probably the best approximation yet to appear on a computer screen, but being the best of a mediocre bunch is hardly a ringing endorsement.

When WAR went live I was bored and overwhelmed at the same time. It seemed to me a barely disguised fantasy spin on Team Fortress, with maps you have to trudge to, while picking up quests along the way in order to unlock more maps. The tribal and racial animosities of the source material had been blended into blue vs red, and realising such a travesty had occurred was enough to end my subscription. Within a few weeks of my own quiet protestations, the backlash

Hey everybody, it's Sean Bean!

Words that tell a thousand pictures.

Another Friday night out in central Nottingham.

Almost makes you want to take out a White Dwarf subscription.

Replay continued

began and the game took over from Conan as the genre's spoilt little rich kid that it was suddenly cool to poke fun at.

I'm not sure whether it's the game or my view of it that has changed, but playing the so-called Endless Trial (Conan has a similar trial too) has been a significantly more positive experience. By removing the drive to explore as much landscape and levels as possible, during – what was until recently – a meagre 10 day window of opportunity, the limits now are more relaxed. You can try out both armies, Order (blue) or Destruction (red), and casually take each of the classes to level 10 in your own time, during which (EA hope) you will have invested and enjoyed enough to take out a subscription.

It's a genius move for a number of reasons. The first is that for all its design faults, the variety in the character classes and the fun you can have with them is unlike that available in any other fantasy MMO. From the standard tanks and healers to the innovative Engineer and hilarious Squid Herder, there are enough avenues for fun that the fairly limited geography seems hardly to matter. That you can then meaningfully engage in RvR combat at the trial's 'end game' is the proverbial cherry on the cake. I haven't had this much fun playing a trial in years. That I don't have to worry about it ending in a few days is very reassuring, in spite of the fact I will have moved onto to a different game before then.

Regardless of whether Warhammer passed you by, or your early interest lapsed due to some latent adolescent rage, I would urge you give it the new trial a shot, if only for the reason that it affords you the time to make up your own mind about taking it further. If only all trials were as generous. ●

Preparing for some RnR, or should that be RvR?

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